
GBC Members Newsletter (Communication, Pastor Bryan's Forthcoming Sermon, and Anxiety)

1 message

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Members Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. – Psalm 62:8

What an amazing comfort to know that we can trust in God at all times! Even when the world is being turned upside down by a tiny virus. As Christians, we cast our cares upon the One who brings desolations upon the earth (Ps 46:8) trusting in His sovereign goodness. Indeed, we pour out our hearts before Him in prayer with our every need! For He is a refuge for us!

As a church leadership, and as your shepherds, we desire to continue to care for you in this season when we are not able to gather together in person. As you heard on Monday, we are seeking to submit ourselves to our governing authorities as Scripture commands (1 Pet 2:13) and love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Therefore we are suspending all gatherings of 10 or more people.

Communication. In the meantime, we are planning to utilize email as a strategic means of communication. Several times throughout the week we will email all of our Members and Regular Attenders with updates and encouragements! That being said, we know that we do not have everyone's email address. If you know of someone who has not been receiving our communications and would like to be added to the list, please have them send

a note to Matthew at matthewb@gbcmt.org along with their full names.

Basic Needs Ministry Update. We have had around 20 amazing people already tell us that they would like to serve our elderly and “at-risk” population through whatever means possible. This team has begun by reaching out with phone calls to check-in and assess needs. If you want to be part of this ministry which for now includes making phone calls, offering prayer, giving encouragement, making grocery runs, etc., please email Heidi at heidis@gbcmt.org. She will get you up to speed on how the ministry is coming together.

Pastor Bryan’s Sunday Morning Sermon. With the world’s attention fixed upon the destructive novel coronavirus, this coming Sunday morning Pastor Bryan is looking forward to encouraging us as a Body to fix our eyes upon the Lord. As a bit of a preview, here is a note from our shepherd, Pastor Bryan, regarding the sermon titled, “When a virus is big and God is small”:

We all know what is dominating the news and dominating our lives right now. Our world is focused on the coronavirus and all the uncertainty surrounding it.

In the midst of all the uncertainty, we need something that is certain and something we can hold on to for security. We need a word that is certain, and we have that in one of the greatest promises of the Bible - Romans 8:28. May we, the people of God, be focused on God and His promises. Seeing God makes a tremendous difference! May God grant us the awesome privilege of seeing Him and may that glimpse cause us to have confidence in these times of fear. My goal in this Sunday’s message is to encourage us through God’s Word to do this very thing.

Sunday Corporate Worship. As a reminder, our corporate worship service (including Pastor Bryan’s sermon) will be available for viewing starting at 9am this coming Sunday morning. Singing songs that point us to the Lord, His character, and His provision is a soul-strengthening activity for all of us. Plan to sing along with Pastor Jeremy through the online service. We will send you more information later in the week.

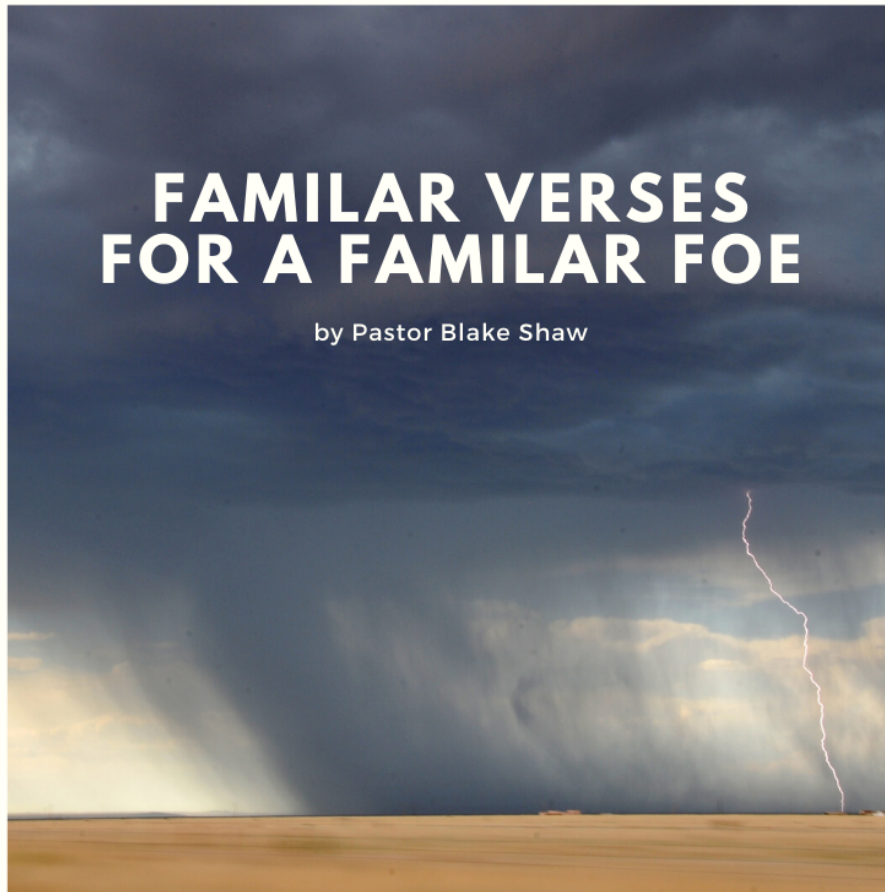
In closing, make sure you check out the devotional word below written by our counseling pastor, Blake Shaw. We know that you will be encouraged by it!

Your servant in Christ,

Joe

FAMILAR VERSES FOR A FAMILAR FOE

by Pastor Blake Shaw



This morning as I walked out to the car to drive to the office, the Lord providentially gave me an opportunity to observe a sparrow hopping along the snow-covered ground. A short distance from the car were three robins, walking slowly across the yard, each pecking at the ground and grabbing small amounts of food. I smiled as I immediately began to think of what Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-34 when He told His disciples to not worry about the necessities of life. In verse 26, He urges us to, "...Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Throughout this passage, Jesus is addressing a struggle common to all men (1 Cor 10:13). The struggle of worry, of anxiety, of wondering how one will survive. If that is your struggle, you are not alone. I know very few people who never struggle with worry and anxiety. Sure, the struggle may vary in intensity, but when Paul said in I Corinthians 10:13 that, "No temptation has overtaken you but such is as common to man...", he is making the point that the temptation you face is one which is also faced by many others. This is true, oh so true, when it comes to the issue of anxiety. Would you not agree?

Over the past week or two, one of the common discussions I have had with family and friends is how we ought to handle the anxiety we feel over the COVID-19 virus and the subsequent fall-out. Society has many differing voices

proclaiming a view of the virus. Some think of it as extremely serious. Others think of it as a hoax. Still others find themselves struggling to understand the hysteria created by the virus. Whatever the case, tucked behind many of these discussions is a very common struggle, a struggle that we dare not be flippant about. Some people are anxious because of their own health issues. Those who are elderly or who have immune problems find themselves battling anxiety. Those who have loved ones who are elderly or who have a history of respiratory struggles (pneumonia, asthma, etc.) find themselves gripped by anxiety. It seems that in this season, we are all tempted to be anxious about the health of some beloved person in our lives.

But the temptation goes beyond the health risk. Some are not so much anxious about the virus, but they are anxious about the financial repercussions. Some have had their jobs put on hold; others are seeing their business coming to an end. Many are staring bills in the face, mortgage/rent, electricity, car payments, etc., and wondering, "How will we pay the bills?" This is an all too real struggle. What do we do? Where do we turn? How does our God want us to respond to this potentially monumental dilemma we find ourselves in, as a nation, a community, as individuals?

One dangerous temptation is to casually use God's word in the same vein as "Take a couple aspirin and call me in the morning." We dare not handle God's Word like this as we formulate an answer to the battle with anxiety. We dare not shepherd the souls of people who are gripped with fear and anxiety with a "read a couple of verses and call me in the morning" approach. That's careless. That's unloving. So where do we go?

If you were to survey the Christians who make up the church today and ask them, "Where do you go in Scripture to address anxiety?" the common answer you would most likely get is Philippians 4:6-7. Ah, these are such precious verses. But in your familiarity, don't just blow past them. God says in these two short verses, "Be anxious for nothing (that's pretty all-inclusive), but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." These are excellent verses that we must ponder during times of anxiety. God gives us an imperative/command to not be anxious about anything. That includes a virus. That includes financial struggles. That includes... (you fill in the blanks).

But God doesn't just lay down a command and end it there. In fact, He continues and tells us to pray and let our requests be made known to Him. This is not you providing new, unknown information to an All-knowing God. He already knows your needs before you even ask. Jesus said that clearly in Matthew 6:32. He knows. But when we make our requests known to God, we are giving much glory to Him, because we are turning to Him, acknowledging

that we are dependent upon Him (living by faith) and seeing Him as the answer to the problems that stir up our anxious moments. Now, in this Philippians passage, there's a little two-word phrase in verse 6 that we often-times skip over. Don't miss it. Yes, pray. Yes, cast your cares on God for He cares for you (I Peter 5:7). Yes, petition God. But don't miss the two words, "***with thanksgiving.***" Part of the answer to being anxious is found in being thankful. Oh, we as God's people have so much to be thankful for, even in the midst of instability! Listen to what one author wrote, "God's promises support the wisdom of gratitude. He has promised that no trial believers face will be too difficult for them to handle (I Cor 10:13). He has also promised to use everything that happens in believers' lives for their ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Even suffering leads to their being perfected, confirmed, strengthened, and established (I Peter 5:10). Believers should be thankful for God's power (Psalm 62:11; I Peter 1:5; Rev 4:11), for His promises (Deut 1:11; 2 Cor 1:20), for the hope of relief from suffering (2 Cor 4:17; I Peter 5:10), for the hope of glory (Romans 5:2; Col 1:27), for His mercy (Romans 15:9), and for His perfecting work in them (Philippians 1:6). People become worried, anxious, and fearful because they do not trust in God's wisdom, power, or goodness..."

The believer can truly find many things to thank God for, even in the midst of a culture that is shaking. Paul continues and tells us that as we practice praying to God with our requests and with thanksgiving, that the outcome is that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds. This is a radical peace. It's not superficial. It's not a peace that one can fabricate by simply stirring up the power of positive thinking. It's the peace ***of God.*** Such peace goes beyond human comprehension. In other words, it is a supernatural peace directly connected to believing and trusting that God is wise, that He is powerful (more powerful than a virus and an unstable economy), and that He is good.

This is all well and good but don't miss the bookends in this passage. I think it is interesting that at the end of verse 5 we are reminded that "the Lord is near." Ponder this. Your Lord (Master) is near. Not off in some distant galaxy, withdrawn from all that is happening in your life. Unlike the view of the deist, who believes that there is a God who created, spun the world into existence and then pulled away to let nature run its course without any supernatural involvement, we are told here that our Lord-our God- is near. If our Lord is not near, we ***should*** tremble! We ***should*** be gripped by anxiety. Panic attacks should be the norm for us. But our Lord is near. He is oh so aware of your situation. And, He cares for you (I Peter 5:7)! This is almost too much to comprehend. The God of Creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit care for ***you.***

Look at the other bookend of this passage. One of the most overlooked verses in the discussion about anxiety is verse 8. Notice that Paul gives us eight categories in this verse: True, Noble, Just, Pure, Lovely, Of Good Report,

Excellent, Praiseworthy. Paul ends this verse with this statement: "Let your mind dwell on such things." The Greek wording that Paul used is not just an imperative, but it also is saying that this should be on-going. We should have our minds dwelling perpetually on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, excellent, and praiseworthy. I think I can speak for most of us, when we battle with anxiety. In those moments our minds rarely think on things in those categories, yet we have this imperative. God wants our minds. He wants us to take our thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:5) and have them dwell on specific things.

Now, lest one is tempted to respond and say, "Yeah, I can quote that verse, it's nice and I've known that verse for decades," maybe a specific assignment is in order. Since many people are quarantined, take some time and get out several pieces of paper. Under each of these categories (True, Noble, Just, Pure, Lovely, Of Good Report, Excellent, Praiseworthy), write a list of things that fit in the category. For example: What are specific things that are true? Think biblically. List those things. If you gave some time to this category you could come up with many items that are true. What things are noble or "worthy of respect"? List the specific things. What things are just---that is, what things are right? Think of things that are in harmony with God's standard of holiness. List them. What are things that are morally clean and undefiled-pure? Put them on the list. What are some things that are lovely, pleasing, kind, or gracious? Look around you. Look at God's creation. List those things. What are some things that are highly regarded or thought well of, things like kindness, common courtesy, caring for others, and respect for others? List those items. And last, what things are excellent and what things are worthy of praise. List those things. The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul's pen-tells us to let our minds dwell on these things. My friends, in the midst of times of temptation to be anxious, let's turn our minds to think on the specific things found in our list.

As we, as God's people, walk through this valley of instability, remember that the Lord is near. Since He is near, pray. Since He is near, be thankful. Since He is near, start your days and throughout the days, have your mind think on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, excellent, and praiseworthy. The peace of God is a reality that you can know. We, my friends, can know such peace, when we turn to our God for He and He alone is the source of comfort, provision, direction, and stability. He, as our only source of hope, wants us to trust in Him with all of our hearts. He wants us to not lean on our own understanding. Trust in Him, my friends. Trust in Him.



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